

UCET SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

It barely seems possible, but the last spring newsletter was issued just after the first Covid lockdown hit. So much has happened since then. Most notably, from a UCET perspective, is the heroic response of the ITE sector to meeting the needs of student teachers, schools and local communities, something JNR highlighted in his Westminster Education Forum speech on 23 February, the text of which can be found at: <https://www.ucet.ac.uk/12761/a-slap-in-the-face-the-english-governments-plans-for-initial-teacher-education> The country, as we have said before, owes you all a debt of gratitude.

The latest **Covid guidance** for ITE providers in England was published on 12 February, and reflects discussions between DfE, UCET, NASBTT and others and can be found at: <https://www.ucet.ac.uk/12672/dfе-covid-19-february-2021-updates>

ITE providers can (subject to parliamentary approval) make recommendations for QTS in 2020/21 based on the progress student teachers have made towards demonstrating that they meet the teachers standards where ITE has been disrupted because of the pandemic. This flexibility should only be used where necessary and appropriate. We are in continuing discussions about the provision of support for student teachers who, through no fault of their own, can't be recommended for QTS this year. Regular discussions have also been taking place with the **Welsh Government** about its Covid 19 response. This resulted in updated guidance which can be found at: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-additional-temporary-guidance-initial-teacher-education-ite-partnerships>

Discussions are also taking place in Wales about provision of support for NQTs during their induction year. In **Northern Ireland**, JNR and representatives of each of the four ITE HEIs have been meeting with the Department of Education, GTCNI, Education Authority, ETI and school colleagues as part of a task force to consider the impact of the pandemic on placements. This has led to the development of robust plans, and back up plans, to ensure that student teachers get the experiences and support they need and are robustly assessed. In **Scotland**, Jackie Moses has been attending meetings of the Scottish Deans of Education where similar issues have been covered. The Council of Deans and Scottish Government have met regularly throughout the pandemic and have developed a Framework for Initial Teacher Education which provides clear guidance in the current climate. The collegiate approach between government's statutory agencies and the sector about Covid 19 across all parts of the UK is a testament to what can be achieved if we all work together in an open and transparent way.

Unfortunately, in England, that collegiate approach does not seem to extend to the development of policy in relation to the **Market Review of ITE and the establishment of the new Institute of Teaching**, details of which were both announced during the early hours of Saturday 2 January, some months after the establishment of an Expert Advisory Group to advise ministers about the market review. Although UCET and NASBTT were involved in some discussions, other sector representatives were not involved until UCET issued a press statement, following on from earlier statements, at the end of January. Copies of these statements can be found at:

<https://www.ucet.ac.uk/12787/press-notice-ite-market-review-february-2020>
and <https://www.ucet.ac.uk/12789/blog-market-review-of-ite-january-2021>

Although DfE has been at pains to say that they are working with a '*blank sheet of paper*' and have no preconceived ideas about the outcome of the review, it seems unlikely that after several months of deliberation they have still not developed any preferred models for discussion. This apparent secrecy does nothing to assuage suspicions that the genuine fears we have expressed about the possible outcome of the review will not be realised. Neither do references to the Institute of Teaching being part of an '*ambitious*' reform of ITE.

UCET does not object to an in-depth review of ITE. While all objective and impartial indicators show that the quality of ITE in England is extremely good, there will always be room for further development, for example in terms of the length of programmes, placement issues and lessons to be learned from the pandemic. But the review should be conducted to a reasonable timescale, with evidence invited from and discussed with a range of different stakeholders, and properly and openly interrogated. Time should be allowed for schools and ITE providers to adjust to life after the pandemic and consider what has been learned during lockdown about how the structure, content and delivery of ITE might be reformed. And, crucially, time should be allowed for evidence about the implementation of the **Core Content Framework** to be gained from inspections to be carried out under the new OfSTED inspection framework, which are likely to begin from April and will probably include both face-to-face and remote components. The DfE appears, without any evidence, to be assuming that the CCF will not be properly implemented. We are concerned that already half-informed (or half-baked!) proposals will be issued with little or no public consultation and then imposed on an unwilling and unprepared sector. That is not how good governance or policy implementation works.

UCET has, on behalf of our members, taken a number of actions in response to the Market Review. We are continuing to be involved in discussions with people working on the review, during which we will of course always respect confidences. We have met with people from a range of organisations, including: UUK; Guild HE; the Cathedrals Group; The Alliance Group; NAHT, the APPG and with people from within member institutions up to Vice Chancellor level to express our concerns and agree ways forward. We have met with politicians, parliamentarians, shadow ministers, as have colleagues from individual universities. We have been working closely in partnership with NASBTT, who share many of our concerns. We have also invested a proportion of UCET reserves to engage the services of public relations' experts, PLMR, to help us demonstrate the strengths of ITE in this country and to argue our case. A website including examples of good practice and the logos of supportive organisations has been created and can be found at <https://www.teachbest.education/>. We are grateful to all colleagues who have submitted case studies for the website and we would welcome more.

Applications to QTS programmes are, because of the Covid/recession effect, are buoyant, with a 42% increase reported in January <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/news-events/nfer-blogs/teacher-training-applications-up-by-42-percent/>

although difficulties continue in some key subject areas. However, the welcome increase in applications cannot disguise the fact that the structural reasons why we are faced with periodic teacher supply problems will remain. Another reason why DfE should nurture rather than undermine the country's highly effective teacher supply base.

The new 87 **Teaching School Hubs** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-school-hubs> were announced by DfE on 10 February. The precise role of the new hubs, and how they relate to the market review and the Institute of Teaching, is not yet clear. We hope that the existing sector will be able to work with them in an open, transparent and genuine collegiate way.

Meetings of **UCET forums and committees** have been continuing through the pandemic, with attendance higher than when we used to meet face-to-face. The use of new technology has also allowed us to hold additional meetings, including interim meetings on our Covid responses of the primary & early years, secondary and management forums. At its March meeting the UCET Executive agreed that for meetings for the rest of this calendar year would continue to take place on line.

The 2021 **UCET conference** will take place on-line (with the possibility of a live component) on 2-3 November and a number of keynotes and workshop & symposia have already been agreed. We would welcome more. Please could anyone who is interested in presenting, or who has suggestions for presenters, contact James at j.noble-rogers@ucet.ac.uk.

Colleagues involved in ITE for the **post-compulsory** sector have been as affected as everyone else by the pandemic, and members of the Post 16 committee were pleased to welcome again colleagues from the DfE and ETF to its meeting to discuss relaxations to the DET programme requirements (e.g. in regard to observed teaching hours) and other non-Covid related issues, notably the implications of the January FE and Skills White paper, details of which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>

Other issues discussed have included financial support for students in the sector, the mental health and well-being of students and staff and recruitment to ITE programmes.

We were pleased in January to publish the new UCET paper on effective **CPD** for teachers, and are very grateful to members of the CPD forum sub-group for its work on this. A copy of the paper can be found at: <https://www.ucet.ac.uk/12611/ucet-paper-on-effective-continuing-professional-development-jan-2021> It will be a living document that will evolve over time. We hope that it will be discussed widely at UCET and other events.

The paper follows the publication last year of the influential **Intellectual Base of Teacher Education (IBTE) paper**, which had a direct impact on UCET's strategic plan for 2020-2025 and has informed our responses to the ITE Market Review. We are very pleased that the IBTE paper will be discussed at this year's on-line TEAN conference, registration for which is open at: <https://tean.ac.uk/>

Also on the CPD front, the successful bidders for the ECF national roll-out have been announced: <https://www.tes.com/news/revealed-early-career-teacher-trainers-selected-dfe>

We are delighted that, following discussions at the **Research & International** Forum, a new cross-UCET sub group on **equalities** issues has been established. The group's remit currently covers three key areas, namely: to establish and monitor baseline data, to raise awareness of inequalities and to examine ways to address inequalities including sharing good practice. The group has a good representation from across the sector and

includes partners from schools. UCET was proud to be a co-signatory to a letter to the Secretary of State organised by the Diversity round-table expressing concern about reductions in funding for diversity and equalities projects. Other issues discussed at the forum include the **Research Assessment Framework**, and a number of International issues, including the DfE's plans for a new **iQTS** qualification, which is being consulted on at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/introducing-international-qualified-teacher-status-iqts>

We hope that all UCET members and friends have an enjoyable Easter as possible, and we look forward to better times on the horizon.

UCET
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